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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a basic understanding of the changes taking place within education governance. The document opens with a description of the traditional education governance system, typified by a centralized, bureaucratic approach that has been the predominant mode of public education governance for most of the 20th century. The focus then shifts to a discussion of decentralized, consumer-driven approaches to education governance. Advantages and disadvantages to this approach are listed, along with information on school-based management, open enrollment, charter schools, tax credits, tax deductions, and vouchers in eight locations. This section is followed by an examination of state interventions in low-performing districts, with particular emphasis on the Chicago Public Schools' experiences and how the action of the district and state legislature affected finance, students, principals and teachers, and student performance. Finally, international trends in education governance are explored, with an emphasis on experiences in Edmonton, Alberta, and Birmingham, England. The report concludes that there is a trend throughout the world toward the devolution of authority in public education. These decentralizing structures include a variety of deregulation strategies, site-based management, open-enrollment initiatives, charter schools and tax credits, tax deductions, and vouchers. (Includes 57 references.) (RJM)

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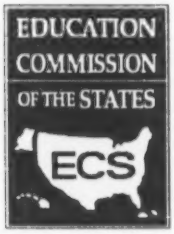

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments v

Executive Summary vii

Introduction 1

The Traditional Approach 2
- Advantages 2
- Disadvantages 3

Decentralized, Consumer-Driven Approaches 4
- Advantages 5
- Disadvantages 5
- Deregulation 6
- School-Based Management 7
- Open Enrollment 8
- Charter Schools 9
- Tax Credits, Tax Deductions and Vouchers 11
  - Arizona 12
  - Iowa 12
  - Minnesota 13
  - Milwaukee, Wisconsin 13
  - Cleveland, Ohio 14
  - Puerto Rico 14
  - Vermont and Maine 15
  - Evaluation 15
- Summary 15

State Interventions 16
- State Takeovers 16
- Mayoral Takeovers 18
  - Chicago, Illinois 18
    - State Legislation 19
    - District Actions 19
      - Finance 20
      - Students 20
      - Principals and Teachers 21
      - School and Student Performance 21
    - Challenges 21
    - Summary 22

An International Perspective 23
Edmonton, Alberta 24
Birmingham, England 25
National Context 25
District Actions 25
School and Student Performance 26
Challenges 27
Summary 27

Summary 28

Appendix 1: Academic Bankruptcy Laws 29

Appendix 2: State Interventions 30

Resources 33

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Many policymakers, educators and parents are deeply concerned about the performance of the nation's public schools. They cite subpar test scores, unruly student behavior and dilapidated school buildings as evidence that public schools are failing. Although some people question the extent of this failure, there is general agreement that public schools must improve. The question is how.

In response to this question, some are advocating changes in public education governance —that is, a fundamental change in the institutions and individuals who make decisions about a state's or school district's education policies. In fact, a number of states and districts in this country have implemented education governance changes over the past decade, as have a number of countries throughout the world. Advocates believe such changes will improve the delivery of a child's education, and thus increase his or her level of achievement and chances of success in life.

The Traditional Approach

In the United States, the centralized model typical of bureaucratic organization has been the predominant mode of public education governance for most of the 1900s. The centralized bureaucratic model serves several important functions. To cope with a large and diverse clientele, the education bureaucracy tends to standardize delivery and resource allocation, and the more centrally made these decisions, the more equitable the distribution tends to be.

Centralized bureaucracies also tend to equalize differences across local groups. The centralized, bureaucratic model often has the organizational capacity to respond to complex tasks, such as the guidelines for such major federal programs as Title I and special education. Specialized units with knowledgeable staff are created within the bureaucracy to meet detailed programmatic, eligibility and auditing requirements. The "compliance mentality" contributes to organizational stability, but may be incompatible with the demands for flexibility and creativity believed necessary to improve education.

Despite these advantages, the centralized bureaucracy is increasingly criticized for several reasons. One concern is that an "oversized" central bureaucracy is expensive and possibly inefficient. Another concern with centralized governance systems is that they most often emphasize process over results. Consequently, they tend to reward and encourage compliance and to ignore, discourage and even sanction creativity, risk-taking and inventiveness. Compliance behavior, as already mentioned, is important to the stability of the organization, and a valued attribute in any important social institution such as public education. However, stability is often maintained at the expense of flexibility and responsiveness to change. In other words, bureaucracies do not easily reinvent themselves. In fact, a defining characteristic of a bureaucracy is its ability to maintain itself in times of change and chaos.

Decentralized, Consumer-Driven Approaches

The stability of the traditional bureaucratic structure is viewed as a liability by those who support the notion that organizational flexibility, adaptability and creativity are necessary if education is going to properly prepare the next generation for the fast-paced, ever-changing and technologically oriented world that awaits them. In fact, in a number of states and school districts in the United States, new approaches to public education governance are being tried out.

- ***Deregulation.*** Over the last decade, there has been a movement toward regulatory flexibility that stems from the belief that autonomy is an important spur to school improvement. Based on this belief,

many states and districts have removed regulations and mandates that dictate who makes what decisions. Indirectly, these changes allow lower units in the organization — typically, schools — to make decisions, if they choose, in areas previously controlled exclusively by districts and/or the state.

- ***School-based management.*** Initiatives to substantially shift decisionmaking responsibilities away from school boards, superintendents and central administrative offices to schools are generically referred to as school-based management. The intent of these efforts is to move governance to a level where teaching, learning and meaningful change happen — at the local school site. The belief is that school and student performance will improve by making those closest to the delivery of services — principals, teachers and parents — more independent and more responsible for results.

- ***Open enrollment.*** Open enrollment policies free parents from traditional residency requirements in student placement decisions, and allow them to select a school suited to their children's particular interests, abilities and learning needs. A major objective of these programs is to diversify and expand the range of educational opportunities, experiences and environments available to students. Another objective is to bring about improvements in the public school systems by forcing schools to compete for students.

- ***Charter schools.*** One of the more popular methods of legislatively expanding educational opportunities and decentralizing the governance structure is through the creation of charter schools. Charter schools are semi-autonomous schools founded by teachers, parents, community groups or private organizations that operate under a written contract — a charter — spelling out how the school will be organized and managed, what students will be taught and expected to achieve and how success will be measured. Since 1991, 34 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have enacted charter school legislation. More than 1,000 charter schools are presently operating, and their numbers are likely to grow substantially.

- ***Tax credits, tax deductions and vouchers.*** Probably the most contentious decentralized, consumer-driven approach is the use of public money in private and parochial schools, usually through a tax credit, tax deduction or voucher. At the present time, the following states and territories have either tax credit, tax deduction or voucher programs: Arizona, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ohio and Puerto Rico. In addition, Vermont and Maine have longstanding variants of a voucher program. Several other states have recently presented legislative proposals to provide tax breaks for K-12 education costs, although these efforts have faltered. Voucher bills also have been regularly offered in many legislatures but have not passed. No state ballot initiative concerning tax credits, tax deductions or vouchers has passed to date.

State Interventions

Counter to this decentralizing tendency or perhaps presaging a new trend, several states are proposing or have adopted a more centralized system for their chronically underperforming districts. State restructuring often involves replacing the existing leadership with state-appointed boards and CEOs. In addition, city governments, specifically the mayor, are often granted more authority in some of these districts.

- ***State Takeovers.*** Since 1989, 22 states have passed legislation that allows them to take over an academically bankrupt district. At least 10 of these states (and the federal government) have actually "taken over" a low-performing district. In a state takeover, either the state legislature, the state board of education or a federal court charges the state department of education with managing a local district for a certain amount of time. State takeover decisions are made for a variety of reasons, including poor student performance (i.e., low test scores, low attendance rates, high dropout rates and low graduation rates), crumbling infrastructure, fiscal mismanagement, inept administration and

corrupt governance. Most state takeovers do not happen without the state department of education thoroughly documenting a school district's problems. In addition, a state takeover is usually the last step in a lengthy process most often prescribed by state policy; that is, a state takeover is almost always preceded by repeated warnings and less severe interventions by the state department of education.

- *Mayoral Takeovers.* A few states have intervened in urban school systems by adopting laws that give control of the school district to the mayor. Examples include Boston, Baltimore, Cleveland and Chicago. In addition, this option is being explored in several states and districts at the present time, including Buffalo, Detroit and Milwaukee.

An International Perspective

The trend toward decentralization is not limited to the United States. Countries around the globe are also experimenting with governance structures that move more of the decisionmaking authority away from state and national entities to those closest to the student. The motivation for much of this activity appears to be the pursuit of increased effectiveness and efficiency spurred by concerns over global economic competitiveness and frustrations over the perceived failures of large, centralized bureaucracies.

Summary

There is a trend in the United States, and in other countries throughout the world, toward the devolution of authority in public education to those more closely involved with students. These decentralizing structures include a variety of deregulation strategies, site-based management, open enrollment initiatives, charter schools and tax credits, tax deductions and vouchers. The goal of many of these initiatives is to promote innovation, allow schools to be more responsive to parents' wishes and students' needs, give teachers and administrators a stronger sense of purpose and responsibility, provide parents and students with expanded educational opportunities and encourage schools to use their resources more efficiently and effectively. An exception to this tendency, however, is found in a number of the nation's largest districts, where states are aggressively intervening to establish central control and authority over systems that are chronically underperforming.

Unfortunately, there is very little research specific to public education on how or to what extent governance affects organizational outcomes, especially student achievement. Instead, research generally focuses on how well schools/districts implement these systems and whether there has been an effect on things such as school climate, teacher or parent attitudes and school decisionmaking.

In fact, the connection between governance and outcomes is unclear. Establishing this connection is confounded by the methodological and conceptual problems inherent in trying to identify causal factors in the complex and very human activity of educating the next generation. The relationship between governance and educational results is unlikely to be either simple or straightforward. Understanding the different contexts in school districts is crucial and reinforces the view that there will be no standard approach to improving educational governance.

Perhaps future evaluations will focus more on the connection between who makes decisions and how the system performs. It is hoped that these studies will acknowledge the complexities of the subject and not simply evaluate the effects of who makes what decisions, but also about what and in what way these decisions are made. With this knowledge, governance in public education may become less a political tool for gaining power and influence and more a policy tool for improving student learning and performance.

INTRODUCTION

Many policymakers, educators and parents are deeply concerned about the performance of the nation's public schools. They cite subpar test scores, unruly student behavior and dilapidated school buildings as evidence that public schools are failing. Although some people question the extent of this failure, there is general agreement that public schools must improve. The question is how.

In response to this question, some are advocating changes in public education governance — that is, a fundamental change in the institutions and individuals who make decisions about a state or school district's education policies. In fact, a number of states and districts within this country have implemented education governance changes over the past decade, as have a number of countries throughout the world. Advocates believe such changes will improve the delivery of a child's education, and thus increase his or her level of achievement and chances of success in life.

Are these changes based on any proven connection between how an education system is governed and student learning? Probably not. Given the scarcity of research confirming such a direct connection, it is likely that most of these reforms are based more on hopeful speculation and conventional wisdom. It is also likely that most of these changes are implemented with limited understanding of the potential interactions between context (e.g., political, demographic, cultural), organizational structure and performance.

It is not always possible, however, to wait for evidence. The stakes are often seen as too high. Still, the potential negative effects of experimenting, especially with important social institutions, justify some reluctance to make fundamental changes based primarily on intuition, anecdotal evidence or desperation. The cost of seeking out the most accurate, balanced information may be small in the long run compared to the price of making changes without such knowledge. This paper attempts to provide such information. The focus is on presenting a basic understanding of the changes taking place within education governance systems. Where appropriate, examples are used to illustrate these changes.

This paper begins with a description of the traditional education governance system; that is, the centralized, bureaucratic approach that has been the predominant mode of public education governance for most of the century. The focus then shifts to a discussion of decentralized, consumer-driven approaches to education governance. Next, state interventions in low performing districts are examined, with particular emphasis on the Chicago Public Schools' (CPS) experience. Finally, international trends in education governance are explored, with particular emphasis on experiences in Edmonton, Alberta, and Birmingham, England.

THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH

In the United States, the centralized model typical of bureaucratic organization has been the predominant mode of public education governance for most of the 1900s. In the early years of this century, "progressive reforms" shifted school governance from neighborhood councils to citywide school boards. The central office emerged as the locus of power in developing rules for allocating personnel and other resources, recruiting teachers and administrators, and, in the name of professional expertise, insulating the conduct of curricular and instructional affairs from external (lay) influences.

The power of the central bureaucracy is seen in the growth of administrative staff over time. Between 1956 and 1978, bureaucratic staff increased in size faster than the teaching force in major urban districts. Urban districts in the mid-1950s averaged one professional administrative position for every 18 teachers. By the late 1970s, the proportion was one administrator to every 12 teachers.

The expansion of district bureaucracies contributed to a "strong executive/weak board" model of governance. At the top of the local bureaucracy is the school superintendent, who assumes educational, managerial and fiscal responsibilities for the entire district. To provide daily services to a large student population, the school system adopts a bureaucratic structure — centralization of decisionmaking, routinization of tasks and standardization of resource allocation.

External demands are accommodated through an internal division of labor characterized by specialized bureaus, each insulated from the other. Outside influences are mitigated by a maze of administrative units and an "insider's" knowledge of "how the system works." The lay board usually follows the suggestions of the professional administrators, particularly in the area of resource allocation. In short, school politics is largely embedded in the organizational milieu of the district.

Advantages

The centralized bureaucratic model serves several important functions. To cope with a large and diverse clientele, the education bureaucracy tends to standardize delivery and resource allocation, and the more centrally made these decisions are, the more equitable the distribution tends to be. For example, a California study found little variation between schools within districts for those resources controlled by the state — e.g., teachers per student — and substantial variation between the same schools for those resources decided locally — e.g., number of Advanced Placement courses.

Centralized bureaucracies also tend to equalize differences across local groups. For example, in the United States, the federal government is almost exclusively involved in the support of categorical programs aimed at minimizing differences across students — e.g., compensatory education, special education and school lunch programs.

The centralized, bureaucratic model often has the organizational capacity to respond to complex tasks, such as the guidelines for such major federal programs as Title I and special education. Specialized units with knowledgeable staff are created within the bureaucracy to meet detailed programmatic, eligibility and auditing requirements. Although some evaluations have found local resistance to federal mandates, more recent studies find that local districts are largely in compliance with these requirements.

The "compliance mentality" contributes to organizational stability, but may be incompatible with the demands for flexibility and creativity believed necessary to improve education. For example, the 1994 Improving America's Schools Act calls for the application of rigorous national standards to all students, including those in Title I and other federal categorical programs. Schools with more than half their population below the poverty line are particularly encouraged to develop buildingwide Title I projects to raise student achievement to national expectations.

As these local initiatives develop, it is questionable what productive role a centralized, bureaucratic, compliance-based administration can play in this type of nonuniform, grassroots, results-oriented reform agenda.

Disadvantages

Despite these advantages, the centralized bureaucracy is increasingly criticized for several reasons. One concern is that an oversized central bureaucracy is expensive and possibly inefficient. In a study of public education in New York City, researchers concluded that "most of the necessary functions were overadministered and undersupervised." A large amount of resources was used to support central services. In fact, the school board's own analysis showed that only 42% of the budget was spent on classroom instruction during 1995-96. While New York may be an extreme example, many large districts face questions about whether their centralized functions could be more efficiently, if not effectively, performed by others, such as private vendors.

Another concern with centralized governance systems is that they most often emphasize process over results. Consequently, they tend to reward and encourage compliance and to ignore, discourage and even sanction creativity, risk-taking and inventiveness. Compliance behavior, as already mentioned, is important to the stability of the organization, and a valued attribute in any important social institution such as public education. However, stability is often maintained at the expense of flexibility and responsiveness to a changing environment. In other words, bureaucracies do not easily reinvent themselves. In fact, a defining characteristic of a bureaucracy is its ability to maintain itself in times of change and chaos.

The stability of the traditional bureaucratic structure is viewed as a liability by those who support the notion that organizational flexibility, adaptability and creativity are necessary if education is going to properly prepare the next generation for the fast-paced, ever-changing and technologically oriented world that awaits them. The following sections discuss some alternatives.

DECENTRALIZED, CONSUMER-DRIVEN APPROACHES

For many, the traditional bureaucratic structure, with its regulatory emphasis, is the single greatest barrier to improving student performance. Some suggest that the solution lies in the hands of the consumers of public education. This argument is based on market theory — allow consumers to choose their school and quality (supply) will follow demand. Proponents of this point of view draw on a variety of studies to support their position.

For example, in the United States, nonpublic schools account for slightly over 11% of the total school enrollment. With the availability of the High School and Beyond (HSB) surveys, compiled by the National Center for Education Statistics, researchers are able to compare student performance between the public and the nonpublic sectors. Using the HSB surveys for 1982 and 1984 and the Administrator and Teacher survey data for 1984, John Chubb and Terry Moe found that market-oriented nonpublic schools were far more likely to produce what they described as effective organizations. These high-performing schools, mostly nonpublic, are distinguished from low-performing in that:

> . . . their goals are clearer and more academically ambitious, their principals are stronger education leaders, their teachers are more professional and harmonious, their course work is more academically rigorous, and their classrooms are more orderly and less bureaucratic.

Chubb and Moe argue that these organizations are effective because they compete to meet the needs of the consumer — safe, orderly schools where children successfully meet high academic goals. Consequently, they recommend parental choice as a way of eliminating the constraining effects of interest-group politics and governmental regulations in the public system.

There is also a substantial body of research that compares public and Catholic schools. One of the best-known of these studies was conducted by James Coleman and his colleagues. They found that Catholic high school students outperformed their counterparts in public schools on tests of verbal and mathematical skills, while student performance in science and civics was comparable to those in public schools. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds made substantial progress in Catholic schools, outperforming similar students in public high schools. Also, Catholic schools had lower dropout rates, and their students were more likely to attend four-year colleges.

Coleman and his colleagues suggest that the beneficial effects of social integration in Catholic schools, based on a common religious identity, explain much of the observed differences in student performance. They argue that close social relations among the students, their parents and the teachers in parochial schools generate "social capital," an informal system of value transmission and social support that is largely lacking in public and independent private schools. By frequently spending time in a variety of activities that facilitate children's intellectual development, parents, grandparents and other adults in the broader social (religious) community provide collective support for educational activities and goals. In contrast, the researchers say that the least effective public schools are embedded in bureaucratic rules and mandates, and lack the social basis for frequent, productive interactions among pupils, families and teachers.

Advantages

Proponents of decentralized, consumer-driven approaches argue that organizational effectiveness and efficiency are improved when decisions are made by those closest to the student, mostly because these individuals know best what mix of resources and what processes are needed to effectively educate students. It is also assumed that the fewer decisionmakers between the education process and the student, the faster, more responsive and less expensive the system.

Differences among advocates of decentralized, consumer-driven approaches tend to center around "how close is close enough" — that is, who is close enough to the student to make the most informed decisions. For some, local professional educators — the superintendent, the principal or the teacher — are the appropriate choice because they have the advantages of both proximity and training. For others, based on moral concepts, principles of democracy or respect for market dynamics, it is the parent and the student. These differences are reflected in the particular approach advocated, from charter schools (the professional educator is the primary decisionmaker) to voucher programs (the parent and student are in charge).

Disadvantages

Decentralized, consumer-driven approaches are too new to public education to speak with any authority about their drawbacks. However, one of the most frequently discussed drawbacks of these approaches is their potential inequities. To the degree that local preferences vary, so will the services and products determined by these preferences in a decentralized system. This may cause few problems with private goods and services, but such differences often offend notions of social justice in the public sector.

Most of these approaches in public education include provisions to mitigate or prevent discriminatory practices, and a recent report by the U.S. Department of Education suggests that charter schools tend to have a racial composition similar to that of their respective statewide average. The findings on England's choice program are less clear.

England's 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) allowed parents and governing boards of the 33,000 British public schools to "opt out" of the existing bureaucratic system, "taking students, money, and all relevant decision-making power with them." One of Chubb and Moe's most important observations of the implementation of this program was that it did not discriminate against pupils with disadvantaged backgrounds. Instead, they observed that the "opted-out" schools were drawing students from "all ability levels" and were catering to the educational interest of their clients, who were seen as "ordinary people by class-based standards."

Their assessment of the English system as "choice without stratification" has been challenged in subsequent studies. For example, one study found that many of the initial choice schools enjoyed excellent reputations and remained very selective after their change in status. In another study of admission practices in the London area, researchers also observed that school autonomy tended to reward "those parents who are able and prepared to negotiate the complexities [of the system] compared with those who are less willing or less able to do so." The rest of this section discusses a variety of specific decentralized, consumer-driven approaches, ranging from deregulation to tax credits, tax deductions and vouchers.

Deregulation

Since the early 1980s, states have become increasingly involved in areas previously left to local policymakers, educators and communities. For example, while most states left decisions about teachers' salaries to districts prior to the mid-1980s, at least 30 states had set minimal salary schedules by 1986. At the same time, states entered the area of curriculum, previously the exclusive purview of local decisionmakers, and made policy about required courses, time spent on various subjects and skills to be tested. This increase in state governance has led to concerns that centralization is impeding school reform.

Over the last decade, there has been a movement toward regulatory flexibility that stems from the belief that autonomy is an important spur to school improvement. Based on this belief, many states and districts have removed regulations and mandates that dictate who makes what decisions. Indirectly, these changes allow lower units in the organization — typically, schools — to make decisions, if they choose, in areas previously controlled exclusively by districts and/or the state.

One of the earliest approaches to deregulation was the waiver. Traditionally, such exemptions from regulations were used to give districts some discretion when faced with an emergency or extraordinary situation. For example, waivers often dealt with the length of the school year — a problem when unexpectedly bad weather hits — or teaching out of field — a problem for rural areas with a limited labor pool. In the late 1980s, states, such as South Carolina and Texas, began to offer waivers to promote innovation. Typically, these states used waivers as incentives to encourage local innovation and reward high-achieving schools. By 1993, more than 30 states reported having some form of noncompetitive waiver program for schools and districts.

States have also recently begun to critically evaluate their state education codes. The intent of these efforts is to reduce the number of state mandates, and thereby increase local decisionmaking authority and flexibility. In 1995, South Carolina abolished nearly 100 state statutes and more than 500 rules governing K-12 education. That same year, Michigan eliminated 205 sections, modified 65 sections and added 25 new sections to its education code. Also in 1995, Texas completely revised its education code, resulting in a one-third reduction in the number of state directives.

Districts are also involved in the deregulation trend. By reducing administrative rules and requirements, a number of large urban school districts, including Cincinnati, Denver and Seattle, have taken steps to shift various functions to local schools and increase the participation of parents and teachers in school management and decisionmaking. In these situations, the focus of school boards and central offices shifts from monitoring compliance to providing technical assistance and support, and from spending money according to centrally developed priorities to responding to individual schools' needs and requests.

The ultimate expression of the deregulation philosophy is probably the "home-rule school district." Texas adopted home-rule legislation for school districts several years ago, and since then Kansas and Ohio have introduced similar bills. Modeled on home-rule city charters — existent in Texas (for over 97 years) and many other states -- school boards in home-rule districts enjoy the same freedom and autonomy available to many municipalities. As such, they can adopt almost any policy, program or procedure that is not explicitly forbidden by state or federal law. A home-rule district is granted this autonomy in exchange for meeting certain student performance requirements, and the contractual agreement (charter) between the district and state detailing these provisions must be approved by both the local voters and the state.

In a three-state study of the effects of deregulation policies over several years, researchers concluded that "one of the most important effects of deregulation for school-level respondents was the removal of regulations as an excuse for traditional practice." The state policy implications of this study include:

- Deregulation should be viewed as one component among multiple supports and elements that states and districts can provide.
- Deregulation should be tied to accountability and incentive structures that promote continuous improvement.
- Development of credible and legitimate assessments is a high priority.
- Not all regulations can be eliminated. Rather than eliminating regulations, policymakers might think about "rationing" regulations. Political considerations and equity concerns will continue to lead to new regulation.
- Policymakers generally need to rely less on mandates and focus more on capacity building.

A major cross-city study of decentralization and deregulation in six urban districts conducted by the RAND Corporation concluded that "no decentralization effort has yet created the hoped-for dramatic improvements in school quality," and noted that "the modest results to date can be attributed at least partly to incomplete implementation." The researchers concluded that for decentralization to work, reforms must address issues of autonomy, assistance and accountability. Specifically:

- School-level educators must control the checkbook, the hiring, evaluation and firing of staff, and instructional strategies used in classrooms. Parents should be able to choose among schools.
- Schools should be free to select help from a range of public and private sources. States and districts should not attempt to deliver "one-size-fits-all" training and assistance.
- Districts and states should nurture a "rich system of school-specific accountability," including new forms of testing and real consequences for schools that fail to educate children.

School-Based Management (SBM)

Initiatives to substantially shift decisionmaking responsibilities away from school boards, superintendents and central administrative offices to schools are generically referred to as site- or school-based management (SBM). The intent of these efforts is to move governance to a level where teaching, learning and meaningful change can happen — at the local school site. The belief is that school and student performance will improve by making those closest to the delivery of services — principals, teachers and parents — more independent and more responsible for results.

As Paul Hill and Josephine Bonan note:

> According to the theory of site-based management, all decisions of educational consequence are to be made at the school and none may be compelled by regulation in the school district. In practice, however, it may be understood as a relative term, i.e., as an increase in the number or importance of decisions made at the school level.

Most states have some form of state legislated site-based management. Less than a dozen of these, however, are mandatory, statewide programs. The majority are either pilot programs or legislative recommendations.

The definition of school-based management varies widely, and, consequently, there are significant variations in the form and structure of these governance models. Kenneth Leithwood and Teresa Menzies examined 83 empirical studies of school-based management in order to determine variations in the forms of SBM in practice and the effects of each variant on students and others involved in SBM implementation. They found that SBM usually takes one of four forms: administrative-control, professional-control, community-control, and balanced-control (i.e., balance between school professionals, parents and community members) SBM.

In addition, Leithwood and Menzies determined that a number of factors influence the form that SBM assumes in a given district, including: a school district's historical way of doing business, the nature of student populations, community perceptions of the effectiveness of schools, and superintendents' visions. Other key findings include:

- There is virtually no firm, research-based knowledge about the direct or indirect effects of SBM on students. The little research-based evidence that does exist suggests that the effects on students are just as likely to be negative as positive. There is an "awesome gap" between the rhetoric and the reality of SBM's contribution to student growth, especially in light of the widespread advocacy of SBM.
- There is "a lack of strong theoretical argument and empirical evidence" that SBM improves the quality of teaching.
- Administrative-control SBM seems likely to result in the least change in schools and in the roles of those associated with schools.
- Community-control SBM seems likely to result in the most change in schools and requires the largest accommodation by teachers and principals.
- Professional-control SBM appears to have more positive effects on the practices of teachers than either administrative- or community-control forms, and no more negative effects.
- Principals have an especially crucial role to play in determining what the consequences of SBM will be in their schools and, indeed, what form of SBM actually will be implemented.
- There is a huge cost, in principals' and teachers' time and effort, required to make any form of SBM work even reasonably well, especially in the early years of implementation.

The bottom line is that school-based management is not an end in itself, although research indicates that it can help foster and improve school culture and high-quality decisions. School-based management is, however, a potentially valuable tool for engaging the talents and enthusiasm of far more of a school's stakeholders than traditional top-down governance systems.

Open Enrollment

Open enrollment policies free parents from traditional residency requirements in student placement decisions, and allow them to select a school suited to their children's particular interests, abilities and learning needs. A major objective of these programs is to diversify and expand the range of educational opportunities, experiences and environments available to students. Another objective is to bring about improvements in the public school systems by forcing schools to compete for students.

At least 29 states have enacted some type of open enrollment policy. In 17 of these states, families have the right to choose from among the public schools not only in their home district, but in any district in the state. Other states provide more limited options, with students being allowed to attend any school within their home district, but not cross district lines.

Participation in open enrollment programs is low, but growing steadily year by year. The number of students using Minnesota's open enrollment program increased from 5,940 students in 1990-91 to 40,016 students in 1994-95. Massachusetts' program has experienced similar growth, increasing from 1,000 students in 1991-92 to 5,111 students in 1994-95.

Some choice advocates say that the full potential of open enrollment as a catalyst for reform has been undermined — even in states where it is mandatory — by a lack of public information and outreach. In Colorado, for example, a statewide survey found that only one in five parents was aware of open enrollment options that had been in place for nearly three years. Another problem area is transportation. Most states require students to provide their own transportation to and from their school of choice.

Transportation costs make open enrollment impractical for many students, particularly low-income, inner-city students and those who live in rural areas.

Most of the open-enrollment literature focuses on the political and philosophical debate regarding school choice rather than on the effects and results of such programs. These debates often center on equity issues, such as:

- Urban poor and minority families, due to lack of resources and traditional housing patterns, do not always have the option to choose their neighborhood based on school quality, and must send their children to the assigned school.
- Opportunities for choice are not evenly distributed across geographic areas.
- Choice reduces the opportunities that students of different backgrounds have to learn from and about one another, and in some cases threatens to resegregate schools and communities.
- Students who leave neighborhood schools for better schools take resources from the school and students left behind.

Research on the effects of school choice remains inconclusive. While some states and districts report positive results, other researchers maintain it is difficult to measure the overall impact choice has had on students or the system as a whole. In fact, little evidence is available to indicate whether students in schools of choice learn at higher levels than those who remain in neighborhood schools. However, there is evidence that choice positively affects parent, teacher and student commitment to the school and contributes to a shared vision among these stakeholders.

Charter Schools

One of the more popular methods of legislatively expanding educational opportunities and decentralizing the governance structure is through the creation of charter schools. Charter schools — independent public schools operating under contract with a state or local district — are one of the fastest-growing reforms in American public education. The definition of charter schools varies from state to state. Generally, they are semi-autonomous schools founded by teachers, parents, community groups or private organizations that operate under a written contract — a charter — spelling out how the school will be organized and managed, what students will be taught and expected to achieve and how success will be measured. Many charter schools enjoy freedom from rules and regulations affecting other public schools, as long as they continue to meet the terms of their charters. Charter schools can be closed for failing to satisfy the terms of their charters.

Since 1991, 34 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have enacted charter school legislation. More than 1,000 charter schools are presently operating, and their numbers are likely to grow substantially. States follow distinctive approaches to charter school development, and the variations in these approaches profoundly affect the number, type and operation of charter schools in each state. Key variations in the charter laws include how many charter schools are permitted, who grants charters, who may start charter schools and who sets personnel policies.

In 1997, the Hudson Institute reported that its two-year study of charter schools found "satisfaction levels that are wide and deep." The study of nearly 9,000 charter school parents, teachers and students in grades five and above found that:

- Charter schools are havens for children who have had negative educational experiences in regular schools.
- Charter schools are popular with their primary constituents: students, parents and teachers.

- Families and teachers are seeking out charter schools primarily for educational reasons: high academic standards, small classes, a focus on teaching and learning, compatible education philosophies and innovative approaches to instruction.
- Satisfaction levels are highest for all three groups when it comes to education matters and lowest when it comes to non-education issues (food, facility, sports, etc.), indicating that charters are spending their limited resources on "the basics."
- Charter school teachers are a diverse lot, but nearly all are finding personal fulfillment and professional rewards in their work.

In 1998, the U.S. Department of Education released its second-year report of the National Study of Charter Schools (381 schools as of January 1997). This report contains useful descriptive information about charter schools, but does not answer the pressing question of whether charter schools produce higher student achievement than traditional public schools. Policymakers likely will have to wait until 1999, when the department concludes its four-year research effort, for the answer to that question. According to the current federal study, most charter schools:

- Are small, particularly compared to other public schools, and many have nontraditional grade configurations
- Are similar to their districts on student racial, ethnic and income level characteristics, but about a third are more likely to serve students of color and low-income students
- Cite resource limitations as a serious implementation difficulty, with newly created charter schools more likely to cite resource limitation as a major difficulty than pre-existing charter schools.

Also in 1998, Policy Analysis for California Education (PACE) released a study that identifies the impact of charter schools on school districts and the ways that school districts have responded to charter schools. It focused on eight states and the District of Columbia and included case studies of 25 school districts affected by charter schools. According to the study, because of charter schools, school districts:

- Lost students and often financing to niche-focused charter schools
- Experienced shifts in staff morale
- Lost significant numbers of disgruntled parents
- Redistributed some central office administrators' time, and faced increased challenges predicting student enrollment and planning grade-level placement.

At the time of this study, most school districts had not responded with swift, dramatic improvement. In fact, the majority of districts had gone about business-as-usual and responded to charters slowly and in small ways. However, almost one quarter of the districts studied (24%) had responded energetically to the advent of charters and significantly altered their educational programs.

The University of Minnesota's Center for School Change released a study of 31 charter schools in eight states in 1998. This study found that:

- Contracts have been renewed for several charters because of evidence that the schools improved student achievement. These charters are in California, Colorado and Minnesota.
- Charters use a variety of measures to assess student achievement. The most frequently cited combinations are standardized tests, student portfolios and teacher evaluations.
- In addition to student achievement, accountability plans include areas such as student behavior and attitudes, staff development, parental involvement and satisfaction, school climate, fiscal management and program activities.
- The charter school and its sponsor share responsibility for a reliable, valid assessment. In most of the charters, but not all, this responsibility had been carried out well.

- Charters are showing that they can improve student achievement. This report cites 21 charter schools that have improved achievement.

Also in 1998, the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) released a study that examined many of the most prominent claims of charter school advocates against the day-to-day experiences of educators, parents, and students in charter schools as well as in nearby public schools. Seventeen case studies in 10 California school districts were conducted. The major findings include:

- In most instances, charter schools are not yet held accountable for enhanced academic achievement, and they vary widely in the amount of operating autonomy they need or want and in the demands they make on districts.
- School boards are ambivalent about their responsibilities to monitor charter schools, and many are reluctant to become involved.
- Charter schools exercise considerable control over the type of students they serve, and the requirement that charter schools reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of their districts has not been enforced. Other demographic differences between charter schools and nearby public schools exist and vary by local context.
- Teachers in charter schools value their freedom, relatively small classes and esprit de corps or collegiality, but heavy workloads are an issue.
- There are no mechanisms in place for charter schools and regular public schools to learn from one other, and public school educators' believe charter schools have an unfair advantage.

Tax Credits, Tax Deductions and Vouchers

Probably the most contentious decentralized, consumer-driven approach is the use of public money in private and parochial schools, usually through a tax credit, tax deduction or voucher. In a notable trend, recent survey data show that public opposition to taxpayer support for private or religious education has dwindled over the past few years. In fact, a 1998 Gallup poll found that a majority of all adults, for the first time, would support partial government payment of tuition at private or parochial schools.

A tax credit provides direct reductions to an individual's tax liability. For example, Jack owes $1,000 in income taxes. He is eligible, however, for a given state's $500 tax credit. He subtracts the $500 tax credit from the $1,000 tax liability, and now owes $500 in income taxes. A tax deduction is a reduction in taxable income made prior to the calculation of tax liability. For instance, Jill has a taxable income of $100,000. She, however, is eligible for a given state's $1,500 tax deduction. She subtracts the $1,500 from her income of $100,000, and now has $98,500 in taxable income. A voucher is a payment the government makes to a parent, or an institution on a parent's behalf, to be used for a child's education expenses.

Proponents argue that tax credits, tax deductions and vouchers will:

- Enable more families to take advantage of a wide range of education opportunities
- Improve public schools through competition
- Provide a direct benefit to each taxpayer with a child in school
- Financially strengthen the private-school sector.

Opponents maintain tax credits, tax deductions and vouchers will:

- Divert dollars from publicly accountable schools to private schools
- Lower the quality of public education by easing the departure of students and families who are most informed about education choices

- Increase the state's involvement in religious and personal matters
- Help wealthy families more than low-income families.

At the present time, the following states and territories have either tax credit, tax deduction or voucher programs: Arizona, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Ohio and Puerto Rico. In addition, Vermont and Maine have longstanding variants of a voucher program. Several other states have recently presented legislative proposals to provide tax breaks for K-12 education costs, although these efforts have faltered. Voucher bills also have been regularly offered in many legislatures but have not passed. No state ballot initiative concerning tax credits, tax deductions or vouchers has passed to date. What follows is a brief discussion of each existing state program.

Arizona (enacted in 1997)

In 1997, the Arizona legislature established two nonrefundable individual income tax credits. Beginning in tax year 1998:

- Taxpayers may claim a tax credit of up to $500 for a cash contribution to a nonprofit organization that distributes scholarships or tuition grants to private and parochial schools which do not discriminate on the basis of several characteristics. This contribution cannot directly benefit the taxpayer's own child.
- Taxpayers may claim a tax credit of up to $200 as reimbursement for fees paid to a public school for extracurricular activities (i.e., school-sponsored activities that require enrolled students to pay a fee to participate, including fees for band uniforms or equipment, uniforms for varsity athletic activities and scientific laboratory materials).

If the amount of the tax credit exceeds the amount of tax liability, then the taxpayer may carry the unused amount forward for up to five consecutive taxable years. For example, John makes a cash contribution of $500 to an eligible nonprofit organization and is thus eligible for a $500 income tax credit. Because he owes only $300 in income taxes in 1998, he may carry the remaining $200 forward until 2003 to offset his future income tax liability.

Arizona's tax credit program is under review by the Arizona Supreme Court. Opponents of the program assert that it violates state and federal constitutional restrictions on the relationship between the government and the church.

Iowa (enacted in 1987; last amended in 1997)

Under the original law, parents could claim a tax deduction equal to 5% of the first $1,000 they paid to an eligible education provider for each dependent in grades K-12. An eligible education provider was "any elementary or secondary school situated in Iowa that is accredited or approved under Iowa law, which is not operated for profit, and which adheres to the provisions of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Chapter 216." Acceptable expenses were tuition and textbooks for each child (excluding the costs of religious materials and extracurricular activities). Taxpayers who did not itemize their deductions could take the benefit in the form of a tax credit equal to 5% of the first $1,000 paid for each dependent. Neither the deduction nor the credit applied to taxpayers (single or joint) whose net income was more than $45,000.

In 1997, Iowa policymakers revised the law to allow a tax credit of $250 (or 25% of the first $1,000), to remove the $45,000 income limit and to allow public school extracurricular activity costs to be included as acceptable expenses.

This program was challenged and upheld in court. In 1992, a U.S. District Court judge ruled the tax deductions and credits for parents who send their children to private schools do not violate the U.S.

Constitution's ban on government establishment of religion. The law, the court said, "does not create any kind of direct aid to parochial schools, nor does it create any kind of relationship between the state government and the parochial schools. The sole relationship is between the state and its taxpayers."

Minnesota (enacted in 1955; major amendments enacted in 1985; last amended in 1997)

Under the original law, Minnesota provided a $200 tax deduction for the costs of tuition and transportation for each dependent child attending an "eligible" elementary or secondary school in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Iowa or Wisconsin. An eligible school met state compulsory attendance requirements, was nonprofit and adhered to the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Chapter 363. The tax deduction was available only to persons who itemized deductions on their federal income tax form.

Over the years, Minnesota lawmakers have enacted a variety of changes to the 1955 law. For example, in 1985, Minnesota changed the 1955 law to provide a tax deduction of $650 for an elementary (grades K-6) school student and $1,000 for a secondary (grades 7-12) school student for the costs of tuition, textbooks and transportation.

In 1997, the legislature enacted the K-12 Education Finance bill in a special session held at the governor's insistence. Among other things, this bill:

- Increased and expanded the original tax deduction to a maximum of $1,625 for an elementary school student and $2,500 for a secondary school student. The deduction is now available for tuition, textbooks, transportation, academic summer camps, summer school and up to $200 of the cost of a personal computer and education software. In addition, the deduction became available to persons who do not itemize deductions on their federal income tax form.
- Created a refundable tax credit of up to $1,000 per student or $2,000 per family for families with incomes under $33,500. The credit is available for the same education expenses as the deduction (textbooks, transportation, up to $200 of the cost of computer hardware and education software, summer camps and summer school), except that it does not cover tuition. If a family owes no taxes or owes less than the amount of the credit, they receive the difference as a refund. Expenses that exceed the credit amount may be used for the deduction.

Minnesota's original tax deduction program was challenged and upheld in court. In 1983, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the program was constitutional. According to the court, the program: had the secular purposes of ensuring that Minnesota's citizenry is well-educated and that private schools' (both sectarian and nonsectarian) financial health remains sound; did not primarily advance sectarian aims of nonpublic schools; and did not "excessively entangle" the state in religion.

Milwaukee, Wisconsin (enacted in 1990; last amended in 1995)

Wisconsin policymakers approved the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program in 1990 and last amended it in 1995. The program includes the following provisions:

- At state expense, students may attend any private or parochial school in Milwaukee if their family income is not greater than 1.75 times the poverty level and if they meet certain enrollment requirements (e.g., during the previous school year, they were enrolled either in the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS), in a private school in Milwaukee, in grades K-3 in a private school outside of Milwaukee or were not enrolled in school).
- Participating private schools must notify the state of their intention to participate in the program, comply with certain laws and meet at least one of four legislatively established performance standards.

- No more than 15% of the school district's enrollment may attend private schools in any school year, and no more than 49% of a private school's enrollment may consist of students receiving vouchers.

As of fall 1998, approximately 6,000 Milwaukee students were attending private schools through the program. The amount of the voucher they receive is the lesser of two numbers: the nonpublic school's operating costs (or tuition) or the state's per-pupil aid to MPS.

Various groups challenged the constitutionality of the expanded program. In 1997, the Wisconsin Supreme Court blocked the expansion pending its ruling, but later deadlocked and sent the case back to district court, where the program was ruled unconstitutional. In June 1998, the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled on appeal that the program is constitutional. This decision was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. In November 1998, the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review the case, thus allowing the Wisconsin Supreme Court's ruling to stand.

Cleveland, Ohio (enacted in 1995)

In 1995, Ohio policymakers created a pilot scholarship/voucher program in Cleveland. The program includes the following provisions:

- Students whose family income is below 200% of the maximum level established by the state superintendent of public instruction for low-income families receive vouchers worth 90% of the scholarship amount. Students whose family income is at or above 200% of that level receive vouchers worth 75% of the scholarship amount.
- Participating nonpublic schools must register with the state superintendent of public instruction and admit students based on a set of legislatively established priorities.
- No more than 25% of the scholarships can be awarded to students enrolled in a nonpublic school at the time they apply for a scholarship.

In 1996 (the program's first year), parents of 2,000 K-3 Cleveland students were eligible for vouchers of up to $2,500 for tuition at a private, public or religious school of their choice. In 1997, the program was expanded to 3,000 K-4 students and, in 1998, to 4,000 K-4 students. Once a student enrolls in the program, he or she may remain in it through the 8th grade.

In 1997, an Ohio appeals court ruled the program violates state and federal constitutional bans on government aid to religious institutions. This ruling was appealed to the Ohio Supreme Court, which is allowing the program to continue while it reviews the appeals court ruling.

Puerto Rico (enacted in 1993; last amended in 1995)

In 1993, Puerto Rico policymakers enacted a pilot voucher program. The $10 million project enabled parents with annual incomes of less than $18,000 to receive vouchers for up to $1,500 toward tuition at the public or private school of their choice, including religious schools.

In 1994, the Puerto Rico Supreme Court ruled the pilot voucher program was unconstitutional. Because the decision was based solely on Puerto Rico's constitution, the case has not been appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. The program continues to operate, but students can move only to other public schools, meaning the voucher program has become the equivalent of other public school open enrollment programs.

In 1995, Puerto Rico policymakers established the "Educational Foundation for the Free Selection of Schools Inc.," a nonprofit corporation that provides financial aid for elementary and high school students in public or private schools. The program includes the following provisions:

- The annual income of a student's family cannot exceed $18,000.
- The amount of education financial aid shall not exceed $1,500 per student.
- The funds necessary to provide the aid come from donations by individuals or private institutions.
- Individual and institutional donors are eligible for a tax credit for their donations to the Educational Foundation. The amount of the credit cannot exceed $250 for individual taxpayers or $500 for corporations and partnerships. The amount of donations in excess of the credit can be used as a tax deduction.
- Participating schools must be licensed by the General Council of Education and have an admission policy free of discrimination.

Vermont and Maine

If no public school exists to serve secondary school students, Vermont and Maine allow districts to send students to private schools and pay their tuition. Both programs are being challenged in court. In Vermont, the State Supreme Court will rule on the Town of Chittenden's efforts to allow high school students to use vouchers to attend religious schools. In Maine, both a Maine Superior Court judge and a U.S. District Court judge, in two different cases, recently ruled that the state's exclusion of religious schools from the program is not discriminatory. The plaintiffs in each Maine case plan to appeal these rulings to higher courts.

Evaluation

One of the biggest questions about these programs is their impact on student achievement, particularly the voucher programs. Three different studies of the available data from the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program have come to three different conclusions. One study, by Paul Peterson and his colleagues, finds that by the third and fourth year of the program, choice students had made sizable gains relative to their public school counterparts in both reading and math. Another study by John Witte and his colleagues, finds no differences between the two groups. A third study, by Cecilia Rouse, finds gains in math but not in reading. There are several reasons for these differences, including how each research team selected its control or comparison group and how they chose to adjust for any remaining differences between students who took advantage of the voucher and those who remained in the Milwaukee public schools.

Two different sets of studies of the Cleveland program have also produced different results. Evaluations by Paul Peterson and his colleagues found gains in math and reading scores for the students. The most recent study, however, by Kim Metcalf and his colleagues, shows that students using vouchers to attend established private schools are slightly outperforming their public school counterparts in language skills and science, and doing about the same in reading, math and social studies. They also found that students attending private schools that sprang up specifically to serve the voucher program are performing worse in all subjects tested than both Cleveland public school students and voucher students in the other private schools. Once again, controversies exist about the quality of the available test data and the appropriate statistical techniques to use in analyzing it.

Summary

Decentralized, consumer-driven approaches represent a commitment to build a system that supports competent, adaptable schools, each of which not only responds to state standards, but also takes full advantage of the particular strengths of its own children, families and teachers. To date, there is little evidence such flexibility results in improved education results. Essentially, more reliable data is necessary to adequately evaluate claims that decentralized, consumer-driven approaches to governance improve education in the form of increased student learning.

Counter to this decentralizing tendency or perhaps presaging a new trend, several states are proposing or have adopted a more centralized system for their chronically underperforming districts.

STATE INTERVENTIONS

As student performance remains relatively and absolutely low in many urban districts, some frustrated policymakers are advocating aggressive interventions. State restructuring often involves replacing the existing leadership with state-appointed boards and CEOs. In addition, city governments, specifically the mayor, are often granted more authority in some of these districts.

State Takeovers

In 1989, the New Jersey Board of Education "took over" the Jersey City School District. In the process, it became the first state to manage a local district's daily operations because of "academic bankruptcy." In total, 22 states have passed legislation that allows them to take over an academically bankrupt district (for a list of these states, please see Appendix 1 on page 31). At least 10 of these states (and the federal government) have actually "taken over" a low-performing district (for a list of these states, please see Appendix 2 on page 32).

In a state takeover, either the state legislature, the state board of education or a federal court charges the state department of education with managing a local district for a certain amount of time (e.g., five years). State takeover decisions are made for a variety of reasons, including poor student performance (i.e., low test scores, low attendance rates, high dropout rates and low graduation rates), crumbling infrastructure, fiscal mismanagement, inept administration and corrupt governance. Most state takeovers do not happen without the state department of education thoroughly documenting a school district's problems. In addition, a state takeover is usually the last step in a lengthy process most often prescribed by state policy; that is, a state takeover is almost always preceded by repeated warnings and less severe interventions by the state department of education.

The level of state control and local influence in takeovers varies from state to state. In some cases, such as New Jersey, state officials relieve local school board members and high-level administrators of their duties and appoint decisionmakers to manage the district in their place. In other cases, such as West Virginia, local school board members and high-level administrators remain in place as an advisory group. Local officials advise state-appointed decisionmakers on fiscal and budgetary matters, but still make curricular and instructional decisions.

According to proponents of this approach, state takeovers:

- Are a necessary extension of a state's constitutional responsibilities
- Provide a good opportunity for state and local decisionmakers to combine resources and knowledge to improve children's learning
- Allow a competent executive staff to guide an uninterrupted and effective implementation of school improvement efforts
- Are a catalyst for creating the right environment for the community to address a district's problems
- Allow for more radical, and necessary, changes in low-performing districts
- Place school boards on notice that personal agendas, nepotism and public bickering have severe consequences
- Use achievement data collected from districts and school buildings to bolster accountability efforts.

Opponents of this approach, however, assert that state takeovers:

- Represent a thinly veiled attempt to reduce local school board control and increase state authority over school districts
- Use narrow learning measures (i.e., standardized test scores) as the primary criterion for takeover decisions
- Imply that the community has the problems and the state has the answers and thus, falsely assume that states have the ability to effectively run districts
- Place poorly prepared state-selected officials in charge, with little possibility of any meaningful change occurring in the classroom
- Usually focus on cleaning up petty corruption and incompetent administration and do not go to the root of the social problems facing disadvantaged students in urban districts
- Foster negative connotations and impressions that hinder the self-esteem of district board members, administrators, teachers, students and parents
- Produce showdowns between state and local officials which slow the overhaul of management practices, drain resources from educational reforms and reinforce community resentments.

There is a scarcity of research on the effects of state takeovers. For the most part, they seem to be yielding more gains in central office activities than in classroom instructional practices. As evidence, state takeovers are credited with the following:

- Eliminating nepotism within district decisionmaking processes
- Improving the district's administrative and financial management practices
- Removing the threat of teachers' strikes
- Upgrading schools' physical condition
- Implementing innovative programs, such as small-schools programs and cooperative arrangements between schools and social service agencies.

Despite these positive aspects, student achievement often falls short of expectations. In most cases, academic results are mixed. For instance, in 1996, the New Jersey Board of Education voted to extend its control of the Jersey City schools, despite 1995-96 test scores that were the best since the state took control of the district in 1989. The higher test scores came after years of marginal increases, and still remained below state standards in several key areas. Additionally, a 1994 evaluation of the Paterson, New Jersey, school district (three years after the state takeover) found that standardized test scores remained lower than state and community expectations.

One promising experience stands out among the state takeovers, however. In Logan County, West Virginia, the state left behind (as a result of the takeover) a state-appointed superintendent in charge of a system with higher test scores, better management and strengthened local support. According to the state superintendent, West Virginia succeeded in Logan County because it kept the local board in place, albeit with reduced powers. State officials felt that local decisionmakers needed to be a part of the recovery process, largely so they would know what to do when the district regained sole control of operations. Results of the takeover include the following changes:

- Performance, attendance and dropout rates improved dramatically.
- Administrative difficulties and budget problems were resolved.
- Personnel policies now comply with the law (e.g., all of the district's teachers now have valid teacher licenses).

As with most policies, the implementation of state takeovers has produced unintended consequences. Most dramatically, certain states are facing questions concerning the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965.

In essence, the U.S. Department of Justice views state takeovers as potentially violating local voter rights to elect local officials, and is requiring certain states to obtain the department's clearance before taking over a district. The state of Texas filed a lawsuit against the department, with the intention of freeing Texas from obtaining department clearance for a state takeover. However, the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear the suit, primarily because there was no test case for them to review. Thus, this issue remains unresolved.

Mayoral Takeovers

A few states have intervened in urban school systems by adopting laws that give control of the school district to the mayor. Examples include Boston, Baltimore, Cleveland and Chicago. In addition, this option is being explored in several states and districts at the present time, including Buffalo, Detroit and Milwaukee.

In some instances, mayors have strong incentives for seeking direct control over education. In the past, mayors avoided the political tangle of education, but this has become more difficult in the current climate that focuses on the role of education in a city's overall vitality. Also, increasingly tight city budgets place pressure on mayors to keep taxes down. Schools consume a large portion of that tax dollar, and in some cities the mayor has little direct control over decisions made by urban school officials.

Advocates of mayoral control contend that this form of governance:

- Ensures a higher level of accountability for the education system, mostly due to the high visibility of the mayor's office
- Reduces the competing authorities that tend to constrain urban schools, thereby allowing the board and administration to implement their educational vision
- Ensures that the board and administration are less accountable to particular constituencies and are, therefore, better able to put systemwide concerns above constituency demands
- Allows the school district to broaden its political base of support through the office of the mayor.

Critics of mayoral takeovers:

- Defend elected school board members as a necessary link between school policy and voter preferences
- Contend that the use of contracts by mayors for services like building repairs will lead to machine politics whereby school contracts are traded for campaign contributions to the mayor
- Argue that the usually heavy emphasis on standardized test scores will effectively narrow the curriculum to a pinpoint as teachers concentrate on the content of the test
- State that the governance structure was created by the legislature, and consequently is vulnerable to the uncertainties of partisan politics in the future.

Chicago, Illinois

The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) enrolls more than 420,000 students in 567 schools. Eighty-nine percent of CPS' students are from minority communities; 54.5% are African American, 31.3% are Latino and 3.4% are Asian and Native American. In all, 15.4% are limited-English-proficient. Approximately 83% are classified as low-income, and the mobility rate is 29%.

State Legislation

In 1988, the Illinois legislature passed the Chicago School Reform Act. This law placed unprecedented responsibility for improving student achievement in the hands of individual schools in Chicago. Local school councils (LSCs), dominated by parents, gained the power to hire and fire principals, approve school budgets and improvement plans and spend anti-poverty funds. Upon passage of the law, the then superintendent and school board were replaced, and the mayor was charged with selecting new board members from a list submitted by a new School Board Nominating Commission.

By 1995, the mayor, state policymakers and various groups of stakeholders were frustrated with the LSC experiment.The LSCs had broad authority, but there was little direct accountability or oversight of them. Dissatisfaction with the 1988 reform came from various sources:

- Students in Chicago schools continued to perform poorly. There was no major improvement in student achievement during the seven years of the LSC experiment.
- The LSCs failed to develop into an institution that broadened parental involvement in school affairs. Voter turnout among parents and community representatives dropped by 68% between 1989 and 1993.
- Another budgetary crisis caused parents and the public to remain uncertain of whether schools would open on time in September 1995.
- The Chicago school board and its top administration failed to restore public confidence in the system, and key appointments were often filled by candidates of questionable competence.
- Mayor Richard Daley was frustrated because his power over school board appointments was substantially constrained by the nominating commission that the 1988 legislation created. Often, the mayor had to pick candidates from a slate that included his toughest critics.

That same year, a Republican-controlled Illinois legislature passed the Chicago School Reform Amendatory Act, which shifted control of the public schools to the mayor. This act:

- Charged the mayor with appointing school board members and top administrators, and decreased the size of the board from 15 to five members
- Altered the division of labor in terms of the top administrative offices by creating five "big chiefs," with the chief executive officer (CEO) at the top of the system
- Eliminated many competing sources of authority, such as the School Board Nominating Commission and the School Finance Authority
- Expanded the financial powers of the board
- Restricted the bargaining power of the Chicago Teachers' Union and cut from a year to six months the time it takes to remove an incompetent teacher
- Granted powers to the school board to hold LSCs accountable to systemwide standards
- Gave the district leeway to contract out certain activities, such as janitorial and food services
- Enhanced the powers of the CEO to identify poorly performing schools and place these schools on remediation, probation, intervention or reconstitution.

District Actions

The Illinois legislature's decision to turn control of the district over to the mayor and his appointees set the current wave of changes in motion. However, the law prescribed only the governance structure, and not the district initiatives that followed. Upon passage of the law, the mayor appointed his former budget director as the district's chief executive officer and named his chief of staff as the school board president.

To restore public confidence in the schools, the new administration undertook a number of highly visible initiatives to eliminate waste and corruption within the system. For example, the management team discovered nearly $1 million worth of spoiled food stored in a warehouse and more than $250,000 in

furniture and other school supplies. To enhance business support for the schools and the perception of efficient management, the new administration reorganized the central office according to business principles that stressed downsizing and privatization. To reflect the focus on accountability and on improving the performance of the lowest performing schools within the system, the new administration created the Office of Accountability. This office monitors school performance, and identifies and intervenes in low-performing schools.

In 1996, the district placed 21 schools on remediation for failing to meet state standards on the Illinois Goal Assessment Program (IGAP) for three consecutive years (only six schools were placed on remediation by the previous administration). At the same time, two principals were removed because their schools failed to improve after a year on remediation. That same year, the district placed 38 high schools and 71 elementary schools on probation. At these schools, fewer than 15% of students performed at grade level on either the IGAP or the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS), the standardized test the district uses as its primary performance measure. The schools were assigned "improvement teams" and outside partners, such as colleges and universities, to help them formulate reform plans.

In 1997, seven schools were reconstituted, meaning that all their employees had to reapply for their jobs. These schools will have to improve their test scores or risk being shut down. At these schools, five principals and 188 teachers (about 1/3) were not retained. Those teachers who did not find another job within a month could stay on the payroll for 10 more months, but would have to serve as substitute teachers. Nine schools were removed from the probation list, and another 15 were added. In addition, 11 principals at schools on probation were fired.

In addition, the new administration acted in the following areas:

Finance

- Launched an $800 million capital-improvement program that calls for building 13 new schools
- Issued bonds for the construction of new buildings for the first time in nearly 20 years and under lower interest rates than before
- Prepared a four-year balanced budget and erased a longstanding budget shortfall
- Negotiated a four-year contract, including a raise, with the Chicago Teachers Union and raised principals' salaries
- Cut more than 1,000 repair and custodial jobs in favor of privatization and trimmed hundreds of administrative positions.

Students

- Increased math and science graduation requirements and developed standards and assessments for core subject areas
- Expanded specialized programs, including magnet schools, the International Baccalaureate program, honors programs and career training
- Pledged to open several new schools over the next two years, including 11 high schools redesigned as Career Academies, several charter schools for high school students and seven "small school" high schools
- Approved seven charter schools for the fall of 1997 and six additional new ones will be in operation for the fall of 1998
- Ended social promotion
- Created additional programs for academically struggling students, such as extended-day programs in 132 schools and summer school programs, which are mandatory for certain students
- Added 5,000 new slots in preschool programs
- Approved a three-year limit to instructional programs for most of the district's limited-English-proficient students.

Principals and Teachers

- Developed systemwide standards for principals and teachers
- Expanded professional development for principals and teachers
- Expanded teacher recruitment efforts
- Instituted a new teacher induction program centered on pairing new teachers with expert mentors.

School and Student Performance

According to a 1998 study by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, student achievement indicators (i.e., standardized test scores) strongly suggest that the 1995 changes, along with earlier reforms (i.e., the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act), have precipitated substantial improvements in achievement in a very large number of Chicago public elementary schools. According to Anthony Bryk, whether these improved test scores are due to any deep or even superficial changes in the schools themselves is unclear.

According to a 1998 study by the University of Chicago, the percentage of students scoring at or above national norms on the ITBS rose in both 1996 and 1997 in elementary grades, while high school scores showed some improvement in 1997. Scores in reading improved at 271 of the city's 473 elementary schools and 52 of 74 high schools. In math, scores rose in 393 elementary schools and 61 high schools. Of the 109 schools on probation, 84 improved reading scores and 96 improved their math scores. Scores doubled or even tripled at some of those schools. Overall, though, the Chicago public schools made only slight IGAP gains between 1997 and 1998.

In the 1997-98 school year, nearly 41,000 students in grades 3, 6, 8 and 9 were required to attend summer school because their test scores, and in some cases their attendance, failed to meet minimum standards. Of the 31,715 students who tackled a retest at the end of the summer, 14,491 or 45.7% passed. More than 11,000 students were ultimately required to repeat a grade. In addition, 15,000 8th graders who failed were assigned to "transition centers," where they are to receive intensive tutoring in small classes.

The district's attendance rate increased from 91.1% in 1996-97 to 91.5% in 1997-98, which is almost the same as the 1987-88 rate of 91.2% (the year before a major teachers' strike). The state's average for 1997-98 was 93.9%. The district's graduation rate decreased from 65.2% in 1997 to 64.9% in 1998, while the state's graduation rate increased from 81.6% in 1997 to 81 8% in 1998.

Challenges

According to two studies by the University of Chicago, several challenges remain for CPS, such as:

- Broadening the academic gains from the primary to the secondary level, in poorly performing schools and systemwide
- Identifying the proper balance between pressure and support in raising performance in failing schools
- Improving the quality of the teaching force and of school principals systemwide
- Institutionalizing key leadership qualities that will sustain administrative success for the system in the long run
- Monitoring the quality of educational services provided by outside consultants and attending to problems of curriculum and instruction systemwide
- Improving linkages between the central office and the schools in ways that would meet systemwide standards and goals
- Ensuring continued political and financial support for the schools from the state.

Summary

The Chicago mayoral takeover is most notable for the strong managerial authority granted to the top district administrators. The financial powers of the board have been enhanced, and the newly created position of CEO has substantial managerial authority and power. In effect, the 1995 legislation shifted the balance of power from the LSCs to the central office.

According to Kenneth Wong, this redesign enables the board to improve the conditions affecting teaching and learning. Although the state and district actions brought both financial and labor stability to the system, and allowed the board to focus on developing and implementing its education agenda, there remains considerable room for improvement in student learning.

It is important to note that Wong also maintains that there is nothing inherent in the structure of the office of the mayor or mayoral leadership per se that ensures this approach will work in other school districts. Chicago's conditions are unique in that there is a powerful mayor willing to put his electoral tenure on the line by taking charge of the city's schools, there is a competent administration able to address the challenges of running a large school system, and there are strong ties to the business community and the media that help minimize opposition. There is no guarantee that the current system of competence will continue past the current mayor or could be replicated in another city.

AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

In recent years, numerous countries around the world have changed the way decisions are made within their education systems. In fact, there are very few developed countries that have not reformed, in some way or another, their education governance structure within the past decade. There are two primary reasons for these reforms:

- Technical: These changes reflect concerns over the effectiveness and efficiency of the central government in general and the education system in particular. The trend is to decentralize by devolving authority and increasing public sector competition.
- Political: In other cases, the upsurge in regional sentiment has sometimes resulted in the devolution of virtually all former state power to subnational entities. For example, Belgium's "linguistic communities" manage their education systems independently. Also, Spain's "autonomous communities" have virtually complete responsibility for their education systems. These changes are more political than technical in nature, reflecting concerns over cultural identity and the attributes of sovereignty.

Based on a study of 14 countries, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development made the following observations:

- There is great diversity in how countries arrange their education governance structures. There is no easily identifiable model(s), and any comparisons between "centralized" and "decentralized" are no longer valid or useful.
- There is a general trend toward decentralizing authority, though this is being done in different ways. In France, the school, the regional and the central government share powers more or less equally. In Spain, the movement is toward a system where local educators will make virtually all the decisions. In contrast, school boards have been abolished in New Brunswick, Canada, and governance of the elementary and secondary education system has been reorganized around parent-focused structures at the school, district and provincial levels.
- The concentration of decisionmaking authority is unrelated to population size — strong, central control is no more likely in small countries than in big ones.
- A country's education governance structure is more likely a reflection of its cultural and political history than of any other single factor.
- When the majority of decisions are made at an intermediate level in the system (the state and district in the United States), it tends to be at the expense of the central government (the federal government in the United States) and the schools. However, when the majority of decisions are made at the highest levels (the federal government in the United States), schools tend to enjoy considerable autonomy.
- The most frequent types of decisions made by schools (55%) are those made within a framework established by another level of education governance. At the other education levels, decisions are most often made without reference to or consultation with other levels of governance.
- Schools in the United States make relatively few (26%) of the total education decisions, ranking 12th out of the 14 countries studied, and only 5% of these decisions are made with complete autonomy. U.S. schools, however, are consulted on 24% of the decisions made on their behalf, a relatively high percentage. Twenty-six percent of the decisions made by schools plus 24% made in consultation with other levels means that U.S. schools participate in at least 50% of all education decisions made, the third highest participation rate among the 14 education systems studied.

- Different levels of the education system tend to "specialize" in different areas of governance: schools tend to be most involved in decisions about instruction (e.g., teaching methods, evaluating students' work, selection of school materials); districts and regional units spend most of their time on personnel management and resource allocation decisions (e.g., hiring and firing criteria, salary levels, employee duties and responsibilities, fiscal and staffing allocations); and the highest levels (the state and federal governments in the United States) make most of their decisions around planning and structure issues (e.g., course requirements, student assessment content and format, creation and closure of schools, credentialing).

In summary, the trend toward decentralization is not limited to the United States. Countries around the globe are also experimenting with governance structures that move more of the decisionmaking authority away from state and national entities to those closest to the student. The motivation for much of this activity appears to be the pursuit of increased effectiveness and efficiency spurred by concerns over global economic competitiveness and frustrations over the perceived failures of large, centralized bureaucracies.

Edmonton, Alberta

The Edmonton Public Schools (EPS) enrolls 76,000 students, representing a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. About 45% are of Anglo heritage, while the remainder come from various Eastern European and Asian countries. There are approximately 200 schools in the EPS system.

In the mid-1970s, EPS began a major restructuring effort. This effort established guiding principles, focused on results and made fundamental distinctions between central office and school responsibilities. A 1995 report from the National Alliance for Restructuring Education outlined the major themes of this effort, which are:

- Theme #1: The district established clear and powerful goals for education and guiding principles for management processes in the district. These constitute the core values of the district and actively guide many types of decisions.
- Theme #2: There is a strong focus on results, established by the board of trustees of the district. Results focus on customer satisfaction and student performance. The district works hard to define results, indicators and improvement targets, gather results data and actively use this information to make decisions.
- Theme #3: Schools are held accountable for achieving district-defined results and are given considerable programmatic latitude, authority and resources for achieving those results.
- Theme #4: Authority for program design and resource allocation at the school level rests with the school principal, rather than a vaguely defined collaborative mechanism. Principals use a variety of means to engage colleagues and the community in decisionmaking about program design and resource allocation in relation to the district-defined results areas.
- Theme #5: Principals prepare annual school plans that set improvement targets in various results and link program design and resource allocation to these targets. School plans must be approved by the district and may involve negotiation about improvement targets between the principal and the district. Principals, however, are given considerable latitude in defining how resources are spent to achieve the desired results. Moreover, schools have incentives to generate additional resources and to succeed.
- Theme #6: Principals' roles have expanded. Principals now act as instructional leaders with the resources and authority to provide overall direction for instruction, and they are accountable for achieving the improvement targets in the school plans.

- Theme #7: Teachers have many opportunities for professional development and leadership within the school. The new role of the principal enhances teacher involvement and effort in many ways.
- Theme #8: The role of the central office is fourfold: (1) to work with the board of trustees to set purposes and priorities; (2) to create results and indicators of success for approval by the board and to hold schools accountable for achieving student results; (3) to provide customer-driven service to schools in quasi-open market conditions; and (4) to manage the complex process that sustains this decentralized approach. The central office has an organization chart, planning process, resource allocation and culture which support its four roles.
- Theme #9: The district implements the overall design in pilot schools and is expanding restructuring to other schools in a systemic yet flexible way that includes multiple paths and learning from experience while emphasizing loyalty to district goals and guiding principles.
- Theme #10: The central office works hard to identify, develop and retain good principals, and to replace ineffective principals.
- Theme #11: The district works hard to foster conditions of good teaching. Together with the teachers' organization, the district has drawn up a simple yet powerful contract. It hires good teachers and reviews them in creative ways.

According to this study, several factors contributed to the success of the restructuring reforms in Edmonton. First, the superintendent was effective. His perseverance, vision and management style inspired both confidence and trust, as did his clear sense of accountability, creativity and decisiveness. Second, the district enjoyed a core of key leaders who worked on the reforms as a team over a long period of time. Third, the district was helped at several key junctures by consultants. Fourth, the district enjoyed "manageable complexity"; that is, resources fluctuated, but the district had enough lead time and an orderly planning process, which allowed for these variations to keep from slowing or reversing momentum.

The departure of the superintendent and a revising of the line authority between the central office and schools have placed the continuance of the EPS restructuring reform in question. However, much can still be learned from the 21 years (1973-1994) of the tenure of the previous superintendent, and EPS' restructuring efforts during this time.

Birmingham, England

The Birmingham Local Education Authority (LEA) is the fifth most socioeconomically deprived district, out of 366, in England. Twenty-five of its 39 wards are ranked in the most disadvantaged 10% in the country. Forty-one percent of Birmingham's students are from minority communities; 17% are Pakistanis, 7% are Africans and Caribbeans and 7% are Indians. Thirty-one percent are low-income students, and 32% speak English as a second language. The mobility rate among the 444 schools in the district is 18%.

National Context

Birmingham operates within a much different national system of education from school districts in the United States. England has instituted a national examination and a national curriculum. In addition, a national inspectorate on schooling standards conducts inspections of both the LEAs and individual schools. In order to pass the inspection, at least 80% of a school's performance indicators must meet the satisfactory level in the national framework.

Also, as a result of the 1988 national Local Management of Schools (LMS) reform, schools in England have enjoyed substantial control over financial and human resources. This reform measure also gave parents the ability to select from a broad pool of schools which include state (government), religious

(Catholic, Muslim and Church of England) and "grant maintained" (those that opt out of direct LEA control but continue to receive government funding).

District Actions

In Birmingham, the LEA is formally the Education Department in the City of Birmingham. In the city's political system, power rests in the City Council and the office of the Lord Mayor performs largely ceremonial functions. The Education Committee of the City Council functions as the "school board," which oversees the entire operation of the district-level administration. The chief education officer (CEO) is accountable to the City Council, which is structured in terms of a ward-based electoral system.

For years, the office of the CEO in the city was dominated by the electoral concerns of politicians and lacked a focus on school improvement. Within the central administration, heads of services operated like "warring barons." The LEA suffered from organizational fragmentation and an absence of systemwide concerns over classroom practices. According to a report by an independent Education Commission in 1993:

- Education was not a sufficiently important issue in the city as it integrated with the global economy.
- The LEA had difficulty making the transition to the school choice environment and held firm to the existing attitude that it "owned" schools. Thus, it provided an incentive for schools to opt for "grant maintained" status (exiting from governmental control).
- A climate of political contention and personal favors weakened the support for education.
- There wasn't a unified vision of the role of the LEA.
- Standards of achievement in Birmingham were too low.

In September 1993, the Birmingham City Council reversed a decade of neglect in education with its appointment of a nationally known reformer as the CEO and began to restrengthen its LEA. As evidence, since 1994, the city's budget for education has consistently exceeded the national spending standard. These decisions cut against the grain of national policy, which was attempting to weaken the authority of LEAs.

The new administration redesigned the central office as "a critical friend" to assist schools and teachers to "improve on previous best." Toward this end, Birmingham developed a strong advisory and support system that provides schools with expertise in improving teacher and student performance. This involves several major LEA functions:

- The CEO personifies the "teacher-oriented" culture of the LEA.
- The CEO's vision is ably supported by a first-rate administrative team at the central office, including the Deputy Chief of Education, among others.
- The educational needs of the schools drive central office organization rather than the other way around.
- The LEA has developed a full-scale infrastructure that provides ongoing professional and technical support to the schools.
- The LEA has established performance targets at the school level.

Birmingham has also created, sometimes in partnership with other city agencies, a number of support programs to help schools set performance targets and to prepare for evaluations by the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools (OFSTED). A primary example is the University of the First Age (UFA), which provides early adolescents with unique learning experiences during school breaks and the summer. The UFA offers intensive and accelerated learning opportunities during holiday breaks and also

provides distance learning and debating opportunities through the Young People's Parliament. The new administration has also shared its vision with the business community

School and Student Performance

While Birmingham has schools that continue to perform poorly, most of the schools are moving closer to national averages in academic outcome standards. In fact, there have been significant gains in student test scores in the last three years. However, Birmingham does have some room for improvement, and the gap between the LEA and the national average remains considerable in several areas of assessments. Additionally, the percentage of city primary schools in the special measures/failing category, according to OFSTED, is lower than the national average, while the comparable figure for secondary schools is higher.

Challenges

For Birmingham, a long-term challenge is to improve performance among its immigrant student populations. For example, while 14% of the district's white males failed in all subjects in national examinations in 1996, these numbers are much higher for the district's Bangladeshi males (24%) and Pakistani males (17%). There are significant gender differences as well. In 1996, while 37% of the females achieved five or more A-C grades in the national examination, only 28% of the males did. Although African and Caribbean children performed well at the primary level, African and Caribbean males as a group underperformed at the secondary level. Birmingham's recruitment of teachers and head teachers also showed a significant underrepresentation of ethnic minorities.

In addition, a recent report put forth by the national government may alter the LEA's role. It proposes to restore the LEA's evaluative function and require LEAs to intervene more directly in the case of low-performing schools. The report provides a significant challenge for the LEA. It may have to renegotiate its relationship with schools and determine how much pressure it can and should place upon poorly performing schools within the framework of its supportive approach.

Summary

In a series of national policy decisions over 17 years, the national government mandated district-level administration to delegate the bulk of the funding to schools, enabled schools to "opt out" of the government-maintained sector, broadened parental preferences in choosing schools and expanded the role of OFSTED in monitoring LEA and school performance. Losing substantial control over both funding and the most competitive schools, LEAs across the nation faced virtual extinction. Given this national trend of undermining the LEAs, Birmingham's decision to renew its LEA under new leadership was unique.

Birmingham's LEA approached the challenge of improving school and student performance by bridging the gap between national standards and school needs, creating a professionally oriented culture and providing schools with expertise in the areas of school management and instructional improvement. The new administration emphasizes the key role teachers play in improving school and student performance. The CEO's leadership has mobilized teachers' support for systemwide improvement and innovation. In conjunction with this cultural shift, the central administration has developed its capacity to provide schools with technical support.

As a result of these efforts, Birmingham has significantly improved its fiscal operations and has mobilized teachers and head teachers around its innovative educational agenda. Its professionally oriented support model has led to significant school improvement and played a crucial role in improving student achievement.

SUMMARY

There is a trend in the United States, and in other countries throughout the world, toward the devolution of authority in public education to those more closely involved with students. These decentralizing structures include a variety of deregulation strategies, site-based management, open enrollment initiatives, charter schools and tax credits, tax deductions and vouchers. The goal of many of these initiatives is to promote innovation, allow schools to be more responsive to parents' wishes and students' needs, give teachers and administrators a stronger sense of purpose and responsibility, provide parents and students with expanded educational opportunities and encourage schools to use their resources more efficiently and effectively. An exception to this tendency, however, is found in a number of the nation's largest districts, where states are aggressively intervening to establish central control and authority over systems that are chronically underperforming.

Unfortunately, there is very little research specific to public education on how or to what extent governance affects organizational outcomes, especially student achievement. Instead, research generally focuses on how well schools/districts implement these systems and whether there has been an effect on things, such as school climate, teacher or parent attitudes and school decisionmaking.

In fact, the connection between governance and outcomes is unclear. Establishing this connection is confounded by the methodological and conceptual problems inherent in trying to identify causal factors in the complex and very human activity of educating the next generation. The relationship between governance and educational results is unlikely to be either simple or straightforward. Understanding the different contexts in school districts is crucial and reinforces the view that there will be no standard approach to improving educational governance.

Perhaps future evaluations will focus more on the connection between who makes decisions and how the system performs. It is hoped that these studies will acknowledge the complexities of the subject and not simply evaluate the effects of who makes what decisions, but also about what and in what way these decisions are made. With this knowledge, governance in public education may become less a political tool for gaining power and influence and more a policy tool for improving student learning and performance.

APPENDIX 1
ACADEMIC BANKRUPTCY LAWS

The following states have "academic bankruptcy" laws in place. At the extreme, these laws allow states to intervene, and usually "take over," local district operations in cases of poor student performance.

State	Citation
Alabama	Ala. Code § 16-6B-3
Arkansas	Ark. Stat. Ann. § 16-15-418
Connecticut	Special Act 97-4 [1997 Regular Session]
Georgia	Ga. Code Ann. § 20-2-282 and § 20-2-283
Illinois	105 Ill. Comp. Stat. Ann. 5/2-3.25f 105 Ill. Comp. Stat. Ann. 5/34-1 (Chicago School District)
Iowa	Iowa Code § 256.11
Kentucky	Ky. Rev. Stat. Ann. § 158.6455
Maryland	Senate Bill 795 [1997 Regular Session]
Massachusetts	House Bill 5436 [1991 Regular Session] (Boston School District) 603 CMR § 69 1J - § 69 1K
Mississippi	Miss. Code Ann. § 37-17-6
Missouri	Mo. Rev. Stat. § 160.538
New Jersey	N.J. Rev. Stat. § 18A: 7A-14 - § 18A: 7A-15
New Mexico	N.M. Stat. Ann. § 22-2-2 (W)
New York	c. 145 of L. 1995 (Roosevelt Union Free School District) N.Y. Educ. Law § 2590-h (New York City Chancellor)
North Carolina	N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-105.39, § 115C-325 (q)
Ohio	Ohio Rev. Code Ann. § 3302.01 - § 3302.06 House Bill 269 [1998 Regular Session] (Cleveland School District)
Oklahoma	70 Okla. Stat. § 1210.541 - § 1210.542
Pennsylvania	Act 46 of 1998 [1998 Regular Session] (Philadelphia School District)
South Carolina	S.C. Code Ann. § 59-18-30
Tennessee	Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-1-601 - § 49-1-602
Texas	Tex. Educ. Code Ann. § 39.131
West Virginia	W. Va. Code § 18-2E-5

Florida (Fla. Stat. § 229.0535), Michigan (Mich. Stat. Ann. § 380.1280) and New York (8 NYCRR @ 100.2p) have passed laws that allow the state to intervene in a district. However, these laws do not permit the state to alter (on a permanent or temporary basis) the district's governance structure.

APPENDIX 2
STATE INTERVENTIONS*

The following states have intervened, and in some cases "taken over," the following districts for reasons of "academic bankruptcy":

State	District(s)
Connecticut	In 1997, the state legislature enacted a law to abolish the locally elected ***Hartford*** school board and empower the governor to appoint a new one.
District of Columbia (U.S. Congress)	In 1995, the U. S. Congress created a financial control board to operate the ***District of Columbia***'s government. This board appointed a new superintendent of schools and created a board of trustees to oversee the city's school system.
Illinois	In 1994, state officials appointed a three-member panel to "clean up" the financial and academic problems within the ***East St. Louis*** school district. In 1995, the state legislature shifted control of the ***Chicago*** public schools to the mayor and charged him with appointing school board members, the board president and the district's chief executive officer.
Kentucky	In 1988, the state superintendent of education, with the approval of the state board of education, took control of the ***Pike County*** school district due to "educational deficiencies" in the district. In 1994, state officials assumed control of the ***Letcher County*** school district. Although the local board remains in place, the state superintendent retains veto power and can initiate actions if the board fails to fulfill its obligations. In 1998, the state superintendent of education appointed three board members to the ***Floyd County*** school board, who then voted to accept a takeover by the state because of "educational malpractice" within the district.
Maryland	In 1997, the state legislature entered into a partnership with the city of Baltimore to run the ***Baltimore*** public schools. From this partnership, a new, nine-member board of school commissioners was created, with members jointly appointed by the governor and the mayor.
Massachusetts	In 1989, the state legislature enacted a law that allowed Boston University to run the ***Chelsea*** school district under a long-term management contract. In 1991, the state legislature enacted a law that abolished the elected ***Boston*** School Committee and gave the mayor of Boston the right to appoint school committee members. In 1996, the citizens of Boston voted to maintain the mayorally appointed school committee. In 1998, state officials intervened in the ***Lawrence*** school district. The state entered into a joint selection process with the district for a new superintendent, and opened an office in the district to oversee daily operations and provide technical assistance to school administrators.

State	District(s)
New Jersey	In 1989, the New Jersey board of education took over the ***Jersey City*** school district, charging district administrators with patronage in hiring, violation of state contract-bidding laws, political interference in the schools and general mismanagement that affected students and their ability to learn. In 1991, after years of performing poorly in New Jersey Department of Education assessments and reviews, the ***Paterson*** school district was taken over by state officials. In 1995, the ***Newark*** school district was taken over by the state. The New Jersey board of education ruled that the district had failed to give its students a minimum education for decades and would be taken over by a state-supervised management team.
New York	In 1996, the New York Board of Regents voted to approve a state takeover of the ***Roosevelt*** school district. As a basis for its actions, the board cited unsafe schools and low-performing students.
Ohio	In 1995, a U.S. federal court charged the state with running the ***Cleveland*** public schools through a state-appointed superintendent. In 1997, the state legislature shifted control of the Cleveland public schools to the mayor and charged him with appointing the school board and the chief executive officer of the school system.
Texas	In 1996, the state appointed a management team to run the ***Wilmer-Hutchins*** school district.
West Virginia	In 1992, state officials took over the ***Logan County*** school district, after many years of poor management and personnel practices and low student achievement records. In 1998, the ***Mingo County*** school district was taken over by the state. The West Virginia Board of Education determined that "extraordinary circumstances" existed in the district because of continuing budget deficits, low student achievement and a lack of leadership.

*This is not a comprehensive list.

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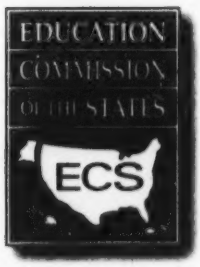

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